

# President Bush Addresses The Nation On Recovery From Katrina

**Today, President Bush Addressed The Nation And The Victims Of Hurricane Katrina On Relief Efforts And The Path To Recovery For The Gulf Coast.** The American people share in the sorrow of the residents of the Gulf Coast as we search for loved ones and grieve for the dead. We have seen our fellow citizens left stunned and uprooted and witnessed the kind of desperation no citizen of this great and generous Nation should ever have to know. We have also seen courage and kindness to make Americans proud. The Coast Guard, first responders, religious congregations, and families have all lent a hand to their neighbors in need. The trials we have seen on the Gulf Coast remind us that we are stronger than we know and that we are all tied together in this Nation. At these times, it can be hard to imagine a bright future for the Gulf Coast, but that future will come.

- **Victims Of Katrina Need To Know They Are Not Alone.** Many victims are far from home, friends, and familiar things. They need to know that our whole Nation cares about them and that in the journey ahead, they are not alone. We will do what it takes and stay as long as it takes to help citizens rebuild their communities and their lives. There is no way to imagine America without New Orleans, and that great city will rise again.

## The President Outlined Three Major Commitments For Recovery Along The Gulf Coast

**We Must Meet The Immediate Needs Of Those Who Have Had To Leave All Behind.** The Department of Homeland Security is registering evacuee households in shelters, churches, and private homes near and far from the Gulf Coast. The President has signed an order providing immediate assistance to people from the disaster area. As of today, more than 500,000 evacuee families have received emergency help to pay for food, clothing, and other essentials. Many families were separated during the evacuation and should call 1-877-568-3317 for help to reunite and assistance with travel expenses.

- **The Government Is Working To Deliver Benefits And Services To Evacuees Quickly And Efficiently.** The Department of Health and Human Services has sent in more than 1,500 health professionals along with over 50 tons of medical supplies, including vaccines, antibiotics, and medicine for chronic conditions such as diabetes. The Social Security Administration is delivering checks. The Department of Labor is helping displaced persons apply for temporary jobs and unemployment benefits. And the Postal Service is registering new addresses so that people can get their mail.
- **Congress Has Passed, And The President Has Signed, More Than \$60 Billion In Assistance.** These funds will carry out the first stages of the relief effort and begin the rebuilding. This is an unprecedented response to an unprecedented crisis, which demonstrates the compassion and resolve of our Nation.
- **The Work Of Recovery Is Moving Forward.** In nearly all of Mississippi, electricity has been restored. Trade is starting to return to the Port of New Orleans, and agricultural shipments are moving down the Mississippi River. Workers have already begun to repair damage to highways and bridges, and airports in New Orleans and Gulfport have already re-opened. All major gasoline pipelines are operating, and we have not seen the supply disruptions that many feared. The breaks in the levees have been closed, the pumps are running, and the water in New Orleans is now receding. Environmental officials are on the ground taking water samples and working to get drinking water and waste water treatment systems operating again. Professionals are carrying out the sad duties of gathering the dead, treating them with respect, and preparing them for their rest.

**We Must Help The Citizens Of The Gulf Coast Rebuild Their Lives And Their Communities.** Miles along the Gulf Coast have been swept clean by wind and water. Many thousands of homes in Mississippi are damaged or destroyed. Over a quarter million houses in New Orleans and surrounding parishes are no longer fit to live in. Hundreds of thousands of people from across this region will need to find longer-term housing.

- **Meeting the Needs of Schools and Students.** In recognition of the communities across the nation that have welcomed displaced students in need, the President is proposing to provide funding to school districts enrolling significant numbers of displaced children. This funding would be used to reimburse school districts for the unexpected costs associated with educating additional children for the 2005-06 school year, such as teacher salaries,

transportation, materials and equipment, special services for children with disabilities, supplemental educational services, and counseling. To ensure that displaced families have maximum flexibility to meet the education needs of their children, the President's proposal would provide compensation to displaced families for enrollment in private, including parochial, schools.

- **The President Will Work With Congress To Ensure Continuity Of Health Care.** A number of states have taken in large numbers of evacuees and provided them with health care. The Federal government will issue waivers to reimburse these states for their extra Medicaid and uncompensated care expenses incurred through January 31, 2006.
- **Housing Will Be Provided In The Short Term For First Responders And Workers.** Mobile homes, trailers, and more ships will be brought into New Orleans to provide housing for the first responders and the service workers who are rebuilding this city.
- **The Federal Government Will Work With Local Leaders To Rebuild A Stronger Gulf Coast.** The Federal government will be fully engaged in the rebuilding, but Governor Barbour, Governor Blanco, Mayor Nagin, and other state and local leaders will have the primary role in planning for their own future. As they plan, communities will need to move decisively to change zoning laws and building codes, to avoid a repeat of what we have seen. New Orleans has a particular challenge because much of the city lies below sea level. City and parish officials will have a large part to play in making the flood protection system stronger, and the Army Corps of Engineers will be at their side to make it happen.
- **Taxpayer Dollars Must Be Spent Responsibly.** Federal funds will cover the great majority of the costs of repairing public infrastructure in the disaster zone, from roads and bridges to schools and water systems. Our goal is to get the work done quickly. And taxpayers expect this work to be done honestly and wisely – so we will have a team of inspectors general from affected agencies reviewing all expenditures. Inspectors general will monitor grant and contracting actions as they occur and will deploy side-by-side with contractors to ensure they are delivering what they promised.

**Communities Will Be Rebuilt Even Better And Stronger Than Before.** The Gulf Coast has some of the most beautiful and historic places in our country, as well as some deep and persistent poverty, rooted in racial discrimination and opportunity denied. Now is the time to rise above this legacy of inequality. As the Gulf Coast rebuilds, evacuees should come home to the place they love with a chance at a better life.

- **The President Proposed A Gulf Opportunity Zone To Spur Economic Growth.** The President proposed to create a Gulf Opportunity Zone (GO Zone) to help local economies in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama devastated by Hurricane Katrina. Businesses in the GO Zone would be eligible for the benefits through 2007.
  - **The GO Zone Will Provide Tax Relief And Loans For Businesses And Entrepreneurs To Invest In The Region And Create Jobs.** The GO Zone will double small business expensing from \$100,000 to \$200,000 for investments in new equipment, provide a 50 percent bonus depreciation for all businesses, and extend tax relief to the building of new structures. The GO Zone will also make available loans and loan guarantees for small businesses, including minority-owned enterprises, to get them up and running again. It is this entrepreneurship that will create jobs and opportunity and help break the cycle of poverty.
- **The President Proposed Worker Recovery Accounts To Help Those Who Need Extra Help Finding A Job.** These new Worker Recovery Accounts will provide targeted assistance for those victims of Hurricane Katrina who need extra help finding work. While victims who have lost their jobs are already eligible to receive state unemployment benefits or Disaster Unemployment Assistance for up to 26 weeks, some need more help in their job search. Worker Recovery Accounts will reward work, eliminate red tape, and promote individual choice to help people find work quickly. We also must ensure that as many of the rebuilding jobs as possible go to the people of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama.

- **Workers Will Receive Flexible Assistance To Aid In Their Job Search Or To Pay For Retraining.** These Accounts, which states will have flexibility to design, will provide up to \$5,000 to certain job seekers to allow them to purchase the training or supportive services, such as child care or transportation, they need to get back to work. In addition to whatever services they select, workers will still be able to receive basic employment services from states and One Stop Career Centers. If workers find a job within 13 weeks after starting Unemployment Insurance benefits or Disaster Unemployment Assistance, they may keep the money remaining in their account as an employment bonus.
- **The President Proposed An Urban Homesteading Initiative To Provide A New Beginning For Lower-Income Evacuees.** Homesteading will allow evacuees to occupy a government-owned home at a favorable mortgage rate, in exchange for their personal investment of sweat equity in the property. Under this approach, we will identify property in the region owned by the Federal government, and provide building sites to low-income citizens free of charge, through a lottery. In return, they would pledge to build on the lot, with either a mortgage or help from a charitable organization like Habitat for Humanity. The Department of Housing and Urban Development, in cooperation with other Federal agencies, local governments, and public housing authorities, will support the development of homes on Federal property in New Orleans and cities across the region, and will encourage nonprofit organizations to commit properties as well. Homeownership is one of the great strengths of any community, and it must be a central part of our vision for the revival of this region.

**The President Has Called On All Americans To Help Those In Need As A Result Of Katrina.** At this stage in the recovery, the most effective way people can help those displaced by the hurricane is by making a financial contribution to humanitarian organizations and state relief funds. The President has encouraged Americans to donate to the Salvation Army, the Red Cross, other good charities, and religious congregations in the region. Former Presidents Bush and Clinton have led a private fundraising effort that has already received pledges of more than \$100 million to aid the Gulf Coast's recovery from Hurricane Katrina. Donations can be made online at [www.BushClintonKatrinaFund.org](http://www.BushClintonKatrinaFund.org).

- **The President Has Asked USA Freedom Corps To Create An Information Clearing House For Relief Efforts.** Important work can be done by all, and we all must do our part. This clearinghouse will allow a family anywhere to find opportunities to help families in the Gulf Coast region, or a school to connect with a school. The President encouraged existing organizations like Scout troops and labor unions to contact their counterparts in the Gulf to learn what they can do to help. Information is available at [www.usafreedomcorps.gov](http://www.usafreedomcorps.gov).

**The President Has Ordered The Department Of Homeland Security To Conduct An Immediate Review Of Preparedness In Every Major American City.** Our cities must have clear and up-to-date plans for responding to natural disasters, disease outbreaks, or terrorist attack. We must have plans to evacuate large numbers of people in an emergency and to provide food, water, and security as needed. In a time of terror threats and weapons of mass destruction, the danger is greater than a fault line or flood plain. Emergency planning is a national security priority.

- **The Government Will Learn The Lessons Of Hurricane Katrina.** The response of government at all levels was not equal to the magnitude of Katrina's destruction. Many first responders performed skillfully under the worst conditions, but the coordination at all levels was inadequate. Four years after September 11<sup>th</sup>, Americans expect better. President Bush takes responsibility for the Federal government's problems, and for its solutions. It is now clear that a challenge on this scale requires greater Federal authority and a broader role for the U.S. Armed Forces – the institution of our government most capable of massive logistical operations on a moment's notice. The President has ordered every Cabinet secretary to conduct a review of the response, and the President will make every necessary change to fully prepare for any challenge of nature or act of evil that could threaten Americans.
- **The United States Congress Also Has An Important Oversight Function To Perform.** Congress is preparing an investigation, and the President will work with members of both parties to make sure this effort is thorough.